

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 2302

LIMDIS

BANGKOK PASS TO REFUGEE COORDINATOR

HONG KONG PASS TO INS DIDIR

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: SURVEY: WHY BOAT REFUGEES CHOOSE TO SEEK ASYLUM IN
MALAYSIA INSTEAD OF THAILAND

SUMMARY: ONE HUNDRED MALAYSIAN BOAT CAMP REFUGEES INTERVIEWED BY
REF:OPS TDY LANGUAGE OFFICER. AMONG THEM WERE ALL BOAT CAPTAINS/
ESCAPE ORGANIZERS PRESENTLY IN CAMPS. REMAINDER WERE HEADS OF
FAMILY. RESPONSES TO SUBJECT QUESTION S FOLLOW:

1. BETTER CAMP CONDITIONS IN MALAYSIA
 2. HARSH TREATMENT IN THAI CAMPS AND NEWS OF THAI ATROCITIES
 3. IMPROVED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN SRV AND THAILAND
 4. TIGHTER SRV SECURITY ON VIETNAMESE WEST COAST
- END SUMMARY

1. REFUGEES CITED BBC AND VOA REPORTS ALLUDING TO MALAYSIAN
RECEPTIVITY TO BOAT REFUGEES. THEY ALSO SAID, IN MANY CASES,
THAT BEFORE ESCAPING THEY HAD BEEN IN DIRECT CONTACT-BY-MAIL
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PAGE 02 KUALA 02302 201012Z

WITH REFUGEES THEN, OR CURRENTLY IN, MALAYSIA. REFUGEES SAID
THAT CODED LETTERS, WHICH TAKE SIX WEEKS TO ARRIVE IN VIETNAM,
COMMENDED MALAYSIANS ON HUMANE ACCEPTANCE AND TREATMENT OF
BOAT REFUGEES. RED CRESCENT OFTEN LAUDED FOR SERVICES
RENDERED TO BOAT PEOPLE.

2. MALAYSIAN CAMP REFUGEES CITED BBC AND VOA BROADCASTS

INDICATING REFUSAL BY THAIS OF BOATS SEEKING ASYLUM IN THAT COUNTRY. THEY ALSO SAID THAT LETTERS FROM REFUGEES IN THAI AND MALAYSIAN CAMPS RELATED THAT THAIS NO LONGER ACCEPT REFUGEES. BEFORE HAVING ESCAPED, REFUGEES CLAIMED TO HAVE HEARD THAT THOSE WHO MANAGED TO LAND IN THAILAND WERE SUBJECTED TO RAPE, ROBBERY AND EVEN MURDER. REFUGEES EMPHASIZED, THOUGH, THAT THEY WOULD HAVE LANDED IN THAILAND HAD THERE BEEN NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE.

3. SRV MEDIA AS WELL AS VOA AND BBC WERE CITED BY REFUGEES AS INDICATING THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN SRV AND THAILAND WERE MUCH IMPROVED AND GETTING EVEN BETTER. REFUGEES DEDUCED THAT IMPROVING RELATIONS WOULD CAUSE THAIS TO BE LESS RECEPTIVE TO BOAT REFUGEES MANAGING TO ESCAPE FROM VIETNAM.

4. REFUGEES SAID THAT CONCENTRATIONS OF SRV MARINE PATROL AND NAVAL COMBATANT ASSETS IN WATERS OFF VIETNAMESE WEST COAST HINDER ESCAPES FROM WATERS CLOSEST TO THAILAND. HOSTILITIES WITH KAMPUCHEA HAVE CAUSED AUGMENTATION OF NAVAL PATROLS AROUND SOUTHERN TIP AND ON WEST COAST OF VIETNAM. ADAPTATION OF A CIRCUITOUS COURSE AROUND PATROLS, THEY SAID, BRINGS MORE BOATS INTO MALAYSIAN WATERS.

5. GENERAL INFORMATION OFFERED INCLUDES FEELING THAT ONCE 100 KILOMETERS OFF SRV COAST, REFUGEES FEEL SAFE FROM CAPTURE BY SRV PATROLS. THEREFORE, SOME BOATS LEAVING EAST COAST OF

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PAGE 03 KUALA 02302 201012Z

SRV HEAD 100 KILOMETERW OR MORE EAST THEN CUT TO SOUTHWEST. COURSE BRINGS MORE BOATS INTO ALAYSIAN WATERS .

6. ONLY THREE REFUGEE BOAT LEADERS INDICATED HAVING BEEN INTERCEPTED BY THAI NAVAL VESSELS. THOSE LEADERS SAID THAT THEY HAD BEEN ROBBED AND OTHERWISE DISSUADED FROM APPROACHING THAI INLAND WATERS.

7. POST REPORTS STATEMENTS MADE BY REFUGEES, WITHOUT COMMENT AND INTERPRETATION, FOR INFORMATION OF ADDRESSEES.

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